

Muscatine Journal

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Chamber CEO: Let's keep Muscatine growing

By Peter Rugg of the Muscatine Journal

Every Monday, the Muscatine Journal will feature a local newsmaker who responds to questions provided by one of our reporters.

As President and CEO of the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gary Carlson has served the Muscatine Community in a number of capacities, from helping organize a state Great Places forum in May to serving on the Community Improvement Action Team.

Personal

Name: Gary L. Carlson

Age: 54

Address: Eagle Ridge subdivision (hopefully soon)

Occupation: President and CEO of Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Immediate family members: Sheryl (wife), Five grown children (Sarah, Ann, Brad, Chris, Shay) and 3 grand-daughters

Q&A

1) Have Muscatine's community leaders settled on a strategy to apply for designation as one of Iowa's Great Places? If so, what will the focus of the application be?

Discussions are under way with several volunteer groups and while no decision has yet been made, certainly the tone is positive regarding a decision to apply. The process, as outlined by Anita Walker from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs presentation last week, is defined but clearly the opportunity to be chosen will be based on the quality and creativity of the proposal. I think, as a community, we can develop a very compelling application outlining why we should be one of the three Iowa communities to be selected.

2) The Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been part of several public forums and presentations over the past month. What are some of the most common things you hear regarding how Muscatine can best improve its business climate?

Most importantly, Muscatine has a very positive business climate; Having said that, clearly there are areas for improvement. Many companies are searching for well qualified candidates that want to call Muscatine their home. We need more infusion of resident, well-skilled talent.

3) What resources does Muscatine have that you feel are underutilized?

While we have made tremendous improvements in the riverfront development, more work can and needs to be accomplished, plus we have not yet leveraged the linkage of the riverfront to the downtown.

4) Who has made the biggest impact on your life? How?

From a professional perspective, the late Mac McGuire from Bandag Inc. was very influential in helping me develop managerial and leadership skills.

5) What's the most important thing other people should know about you?

That I have a sense of humor.

6) What do you like to do most during your free time?

I enjoy time with my family and like to attend Hawkeye games.

7) What do you like most about the community in which you reside?

So many people give of their talents and resources to make a difference

8) What should be changed to improve your community and how should that be done?

Need to engage and encourage more people to offer volunteer service. Everyone can help a neighbor, a child, or help a non-profit organization become more successful.

9) What public service or volunteer work have you done?

I have had the opportunity to serve in a number of capacities in United Way, YMCA, American Cancer Society, Junior Achievement, MCC Foundation, Muscatine Soccer Complex, and more recently MAPS and CIAT.

10) What is your most important personal goal for the next 5 years? Why?

I want to see measurable improvement in the quality of life initiatives and amenities offered to our community members. I believe much of our future economic prosperity is dependent on the type of community we become.